

for it. And it's no coincidence that a disproportionate number of these disaffected voters come from communities of color as well as the poor, the elderly, and students.

Fully one in four otherwise qualified African Americans would be unable to vote under these voter-ID laws. Around one in five Asian Americans, Latinos, and young adults between the ages of 18 to 24 would be blocked.

In my home State of California, a voter-ID bill was introduced to suppress voter participation. It would cost \$26 just to get the required documents to qualify for a government-issued ID. Now, having been born and raised in Texas, this certainly looks like a poll tax to me, which those of us remember as a way to prevent African Americans from voting. These voter-ID laws have a partisan agenda seeking to disenfranchise and deny specific populations of voters before they have the opportunity to elect their representatives in government. These partisan laws are shameful, and they're a disgrace to our country.

If these Republican lawmakers were truly concerned with fighting voter fraud, they would take on actual documented problems such as distributing fliers with false information meant to trick voters, improperly purging voters, or tampering with election equipment and forms.

Instead, they are pushing laws designed to change election outcomes by reducing voting, repressing turnout, and turning the clock back to the days of Jim Crow. This is the exact opposite of where our country needs to go. With almost 40 percent of eligible voters regularly staying away from voting booths, we need to be expanding participation in our democracy, making the ballot more accessible, not less. We cannot and we must not allow democracy to be undermined, especially while we're promoting democracy abroad.

We must unmask these shameful attempts to disenfranchise voters. Let's stop this partisan effort that strikes at the very core of our country. Let's win this war against voters. We should be about dismantling and reducing barriers so that we can really begin to reignite the American Dream for those who have lost hope.

So I want to thank my colleagues, especially Congresswoman FUDGE, for their calls to protect the right to vote on behalf of all the citizens across this great Nation.

ENTREPRENEUR STARTUP GROWTH ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CHU. America doesn't have a small business problem; it has a start-up problem. That was the title of a recent Washington Post article. It pointed to the fact that self-employed startup businesses have been the chosen al-

ternative for millions of Americans, but we must do more to help them. Today, one out of every three new jobs is created by self-employed startup businesses.

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But we can do better. Compared to other wealthy countries, the U.S. ranks 23rd in new businesses formed per thousand working adults. These entrepreneurs take risks to make it on their own, but they could do better if we help them be competitive. That is why yesterday I introduced the Entrepreneur Startup Growth Act.

One of the most intimidating times of the year for new owners is tax season, as they learn and navigate the different tax standards for businesses. My bill turns this tough time into an opportunity by offering not only affordable business tax assistance but business development services so that these companies can get the advice they need in order to grow.

This bill builds on the Self-Employment Tax Initiative launched by CFED, the Corporation for Enterprise Development, a nonprofit economic opportunity organization. According to CFED, nearly two-thirds of all self-employed people are operating business startups.

Self-employed startups in their first year of existence create an average of 3 million jobs per year. In fact, without business startups, there would be no net job growth in the U.S. economy. Nearly all net job creation since 1980 has occurred in self-employed startups less than 5 years old. They are critical to our economy.

In my bill, community-based organizations, local governments, and higher education institutions are eligible to apply for grants up to \$75,000 to operate this program. The IRS will work with the Small Business Administration to ensure that the operators of the program have expertise in both tax assistance and business development assistance.

This is a program that works. With such a modest investment in this assistance, 62 percent of businesses were able to get refundable tax credits such as EITC and Making Work Pay, refunds that they might otherwise have missed out on. The Entrepreneur Startup Growth Act will help businesses grow and help low-income households build the assets that they need in order to survive. They will get the economic security they desire. With this, we will be able to help people climb up that ladder of opportunity and reach for that American Dream.

RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. I rise again today for the 13th time to talk about a stain on the American people, a stain on the

American Government. I'm talking about military assault and rape. I'm talking about the 19,000 soldiers each year who are victims of sexual assault or rape in the military. Those are figures by the Department of Defense. Yet only 13 percent will report because they know that if they do report, they will be summarily removed from service. In fact, 90 percent of them are involuntarily honorably discharged from the military after they report a rape.

So what are we doing about it? Well, I have good news this morning to report. A few weeks ago, not far from here, a nonprofit organization, Protect Our Defenders, was born. It was launched to give voices to survivors of sexual assault in our military. More than 6,000 Americans have signed survivor Terry Odum's petition, whose story I've told here on the floor.

Terry's petition demands Congress take the reporting of sexual assault and rape outside the normal chain of command. I imagine many of my colleagues have received emails and tweets or Facebook messages from their constituents about this issue. This is a movement, and we must address it. Our troops protect us, and we must protect them. Both Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree that we need to fix this system.

Today, I'm going to tell you the story of Petty Officer Amber De Roche. Petty Officer De Roche served in the Navy from December 2000, to December 2005. In August of 2001, Petty Officer De Roche was raped by two shipmates in a hotel while on port of call in Thailand. One assailant ripped off Petty Officer De Roche's clothes and held her down while the other assailant raped her. The assailants repeatedly took turns holding her down while the other would rape her. After they had their way with her, one of the rapists threw her in the shower in an attempt to wash off the evidence. They then kicked her out of the room and onto the unfamiliar streets of Thailand.

The following day, Petty Officer De Roche, with the help of a friend, went to get a medical exam. Petty Officer De Roche was bruised and injured to such a degree during the assault that the physician had to stop the exam and began to cry.

Petty Officer De Roche decided to report her horrific experience to her command. What was her reward? She became the target of severe harassment, was imprisoned in the medical ward, and denied food. I know this sounds unbelievable, but this is going on in our military.

When Petty Officer De Roche was released from the medical ward, her command refused to let her leave the ship and forced her to be on call 24 hours a day without receiving any counseling to help her cope with having been raped. Petty Officer De Roche sought out the ship's chaplain and told him she was suicidal as a result of the rapes and her subsequent mistreatment. Petty Officer De Roche was finally permitted to leave her ship and serve out